



YOUR Health

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services • Public Health

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Get ready for flu season!

Plan now to get your flu shot, especially if you, or a member of your household, are at increased risk for developing flu related complications. Flu can be a serious disease. Each year 10% to 20% of people in the United States get the flu and of these about 114,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 die. Ninety percent of flu related deaths occur in persons 65 years of age and older.

Anyone can get the flu. Flu is a viral infection of the respiratory tract, which is spread from one person to another through the air when the infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Touching something that has been contaminated with the flu virus and then touching the mouth or nose can also cause infection. Illness usually begins within one to three days after being exposed to the virus. Flu symptoms include: sudden onset of fever, sore throat, cough, muscle aches, headache, and extreme tiredness. It usually takes at least one week to recover from the flu.

Although anyone who gets the flu can develop complications, some people are more likely to have problems if they get it. These people are:

- very young children,
- people 65 years of age and older,
- people of any age with chronic health problems such as heart or lung disease including asthma, kidney disease, diabetes, or a weakened immune system, and
- women who are pregnant.

Continued on page 2



Getting a flu shot is the best protection against getting the flu. Those highest at risk for complications should get their flu vaccinations in October, or earlier if vaccine is available.



The ABCs of Packing Healthy Lunches

Are you ready to do your back-to-school food shopping? There are a few things to consider while making your grocery list. According to the LA County Health Survey, 40% of the county's fifth, seventh, and ninth graders are considered overweight or at risk of being overweight, which makes eating balanced meals important. It may be confusing to know which foods and drinks to choose with so many different ones available. But, with some basic knowledge, packing healthy lunches can be as easy as A-B-C.

The United States Department of Agriculture/Agriculture Research Service (USDA/ARS) suggests packing nutrient-rich lunches that include foods high in vitamin A, the B vitamins, vitamin C, and calcium. Start every day with at least 2 servings of grains or bread (1 serving = 1 slice of bread) and some protein and then add some items from the following categories:

Continued on page 4

Get Ready for the Flu Season: Continued from page 1

Some of the complications from the flu include pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus and ear infections; and flare-ups of chronic diseases such as asthma and congestive heart failure.

Getting a flu shot is the best protection against getting the flu. Those highest at risk for complications should get their flu vaccinations in October, or earlier if vaccine is available. Others who should be vaccinated in October include health-care workers and people who live with other persons at increased risk of flu complications. Children under nine years of age who are being vaccinated against the flu for the first time should also be immunized in October because they will need a second shot one month later. Everyone else should get their vaccination beginning in November. Flu occurs throughout the winter months - even as late as March - so you should still get the shot in December or January if you missed it earlier.

Most health care providers offer flu shots to their patients. Persons who have Medicare

Part B should be able to obtain the flu shot with no out-of-pocket cost from their health care provider. The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services offers free flu vaccinations at community sites throughout the county. These clinics are restricted to persons 50 years of age and older and to all individuals with chronic health problems. For more information on these clinics, call the 1-800-427-8700 or visit www.lapublichealth.org/ip. Clinics begin on Monday, October 18.

This year for the first time, flu vaccination has been recommended for healthy children 6 months through 23 months of age. Parents of young children should talk to their health care providers about flu immunization for their child. Parents of infants less than six months of age may want to get themselves and other household members vaccinated against the flu in order to protect their infants since infants of this age are too young to get a flu shot.



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Ask the Public Health Nurse

Q: *What do I need to know about bicycle, skateboard, and scooter safety for my children?*



BICYCLE SAFETY:

Children are ready to ride a two-wheeled bicycle when they're about five or six years old. Consider your child's coordination and desire to learn to ride before buying one. Take your child with you when you shop for the bike, so that he or she can try it out. It is important that your child has a properly fitting bike that is the right size. Oversized bikes are very dangerous. Try starting off with foot brakes until your child is older and more experienced in riding.

Your child needs to wear a helmet on every bike ride, no matter how short the distance or how close to home. Many accidents happen in driveways, on sidewalks, and on bike paths, not just on streets. A helmet protects your child from serious injury, and should always be worn. Remember, wearing a helmet at all times will help children develop sound safety habits.

SKATEBOARD AND SCOOTER SAFETY:

Just like riding a bicycle, all skateboarders and scooter-riders should wear a helmet and other protective gear at all times. Discourage your children from riding their skateboards or scooters in or near traffic. Ramps and jumps are very popular among skateboarders. Encourage your child to practice at a skateboard park, which is more likely to be monitored for safety. Ramps and jumps constructed by children at home can be hazardous.

THE MORE YOU KNOW: Antibiotics are NOT the answer

During the cold and flu season (fall through winter), adults and parents should be aware that every sneeze, snuffle and cough does not require an antibiotic. Antibiotics, like penicillin or amoxicillin, are strong medicines that only work to fight illnesses that are caused by bacterial infections - not viral infections such as the common cold and flu.

The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that up to 50% of the 235 million doses of antibiotics prescribed annually are unnecessary. Taking an antibiotic when it is not necessary may lead to antibiotic resistance - in which bacteria build defenses that allow them to fight off or become "resistant" against antibiotics. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed, such as for colds or flu, increases the chances of developing bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics. If we continue to use antibiotics when they are not needed, they will not be effective when we need to use them.

How to fight the problem of antibiotic resistance?

- Ask your doctor whether or not antibiotics are appropriate for the type of illness you have. There is no need to ask for an antibiotic prescription if your illness is a viral infection like the cold or flu.
- If you are prescribed an antibiotic for a bacterial infection, take the full course of antibiotics as directed by your doctor. Stopping too soon when you start feeling better may allow the bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic.
- Never give leftover antibiotics to someone else or take leftover antibiotics from someone else.
- If you have leftover antibiotics in your home, throw them away unless your doctor told you to keep them.

Do I Have a cold?

Usually a cold's symptoms include runny nose, sneezing and sore throat. Other symptoms may include tiredness, cough and bodyaches. If you don't seem to get better after five days, or if your symptoms get worse, you should see your doctor.

What can I do if I have a cold?

A cold can be treated at home. You will not need antibiotics. You can relieve your cold symptoms by doing the following:

- Get plenty of rest
- Drink lots of fluids
- Eat healthy foods
- Take over-the-counter medication to relieve symptoms of fever, aches, or pain. Never give children and teenagers aspirin or any medications containing aspirin unless instructed by your doctor.



According to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, children have about six to ten colds a year. In families with children in school, the number of colds per child can be as high as 12 a year. Adults average about two to four colds a year, although the range varies widely. Colds are caused by viruses, which are not treated with an antibiotic.

What can I do to keep myself or others from getting sick?

- Wash your hands often and as thoroughly as possible. Wash your hands with soap, including the back of hands and in between fingers, for 20 to 30.
- Avoid rubbing or touching your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent germs like bacteria or viruses from entering your body.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and promptly throw it away.
- If possible, avoid close and prolonged contact with sick individuals.
- Clean and disinfect hard surfaces such as sinks and tables to kill germs.
- Get your immunizations up-to-date. Ask your doctor which vaccines you should receive such as the flu or pneumococcal vaccine.

Test Your Knowledge About Antibiotics! Answer are below (upside Down)

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Antibiotics work to treat the cold or flu. | True | False |
| 2. It is best for your doctor to decide if you need an antibiotic. | True | False |
| 3. Taking someone's leftover antibiotics for your illness is okay. | True | False |
| 4. When you are prescribed an antibiotic, it is best to take all of it as directed by your doctor. . . | True | False |
| 5. Washing your hands is a good way to keep yourself and others from getting sick. | True | False |

Answer: 1. False 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. True

Healthy Lunches: Continued from page 1

- **Vitamin A** - Any type of fruit or vegetable that is deep yellow or deep orange in color contain this nutrient. Examples are carrots, oranges, apricots, and cantaloupe. *For a good dose of vitamin A, pack a 1/2 cup serving.*
- **Vitamin B** - Found in meat, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. Some ideas for lunch items in this category are: pasta salad with cheese and kidney beans, peanut butter sandwiches on whole grain bread, lean meats, cheese, and whole grain crackers. For a treat, try oatmeal raisin cookies, graham crackers or sunflower seeds! *Pack 2 servings of whole grains, whole wheat pasta or 100% whole wheat bread (1 serving = 1 slice of bread)*
- **Vitamin C** - citrus fruits such as oranges, grapefruits, and tangerines all contain vitamin C, as well as other fruits and vegetables such as strawberries, pineapple, and bell peppers. *Pack 1/2 cup serving of fruit or vegetable containing vitamin C.*
- **Calcium** - Calcium can be found in dairy products such as milk, yogurt, calcium fortified soy milk, and orange juice that has calcium added. *Pack 1 cup low-fat milk or yogurt, or other calcium-filled products.*

Choose low-fat products, especially dairy products such as milk and cheese that can have a high fat content. Also, choose leaner cuts of meats. Encourage your children to help you pack their lunches. Have them pick out the content of their lunches when you're grocery shopping, or let them choose from the food items that you bought. That way, they're more likely to eat all of their lunch and develop healthy eating habits at the same time.

How to Pick a Healthy Lunch at School

When you don't have time to pack a lunch for your child or if your child buys lunch regularly at school, here are some tips for them to eat and stay healthy:

- *Go through the lunch menu of the month with your child. Help them choose healthier food items.*
- *Stress the importance of choosing a variety of healthy foods.*
- *Remember, your child can have fats and sweets, but make sure healthy foods rich in nutrients are eaten most of the time.*



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